

# SAFETY ON THE LINE

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*"Gravitation is not responsible for people falling in love." Albert Einstein*

## Microwave Dangers

The following incident occurred on February 10, 2006 at 9:30 am in the O&C Building. The employee placed an aluminum covered mug in the microwave for less than a minute to heat liquid. Shortly after it was turned on, a fire started inside the microwave that resulted in the cup handle melting and the top lining of the microwave catching on fire.



The employee had heated the mug in the microwave previously, "for the last two weeks", with no ill effects. This time, however, the cup handle *completely* melted and most of the plastic inside the microwave went up in flames (as well as spewing black soot onto the wall behind the unit). **An employee called 911.**

**What caused this incident to happen this time and not on other occasions?** We may never know the answer to this, but albeit, the cause may be linked to the metal that was incorporated into the cup. **Metal and microwaves just don't mix.** Metal has a habit of arching in the presence of microwave energy. This sparking, in connection with plastic, can easily start a fire. This is also true for paper with an aluminized foil coating (commonly seen as hamburger wrappers). Extra care needs to be taken when placing items in a microwave.

### *When using a microwave oven:*

- *Never operate the microwave empty.*
- *Never put metal into the microwave.*
- *Use only "microwave safe" utensils, cups and bowls. Never leave what you are cooking unattended.*
- *Ensure the correct time is set for what you are cooking.*
- *Foods and liquids may be hot. Use extreme caution along with pot holders or oven mitts.*



### Safety & Health Organizational Focus

January 23 – March 3, 2006

(web link available at KSC homepage "New Links")



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